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UNITED STATES MISSION  
TO THE  
NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION  
AND EUROPEAN REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS  
(USRO)

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(2) AA

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PARIS 1 FRANCE

February 13, 1959

OFFICIAL-INFORMAL  
SECRET

Dear Lane:

Thank you for your letter of February 4, 1959, enclosing Admiral Boone's memorandum to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I received it the day of your 'phone call.

The statement in paragraph 3 that there will be "significant shortfalls in U.S. force contributions to NATO", which will be reflected in 1962 and 1963, of course gives us a problem with regard to this very year, as the 1959 Review will cover 1962. Also, we will probably be asked for indications as to 1963.

It is impossible for us to give you our own firm views until we have been able to coordinate with General Norstad, who probably will be back in the office Monday. Until then, we do not know the way these matters will translate into figures of forces, nor other questions of detail of impact.

In the meantime, Joe Wolf and I have been in touch with Ray Thurston who wants me to pass on the general comments of General Schuyler on the Boone memo. He pointed out that time simply did not permit a complete review of MC 70 force requirements before the new SHAPE reports were forwarded to SGN last week. The SHAPE report was intended as a basis for the 1959 Annual Review. It was decided to include therein at this time only minor revisions, largely to correct obvious errors and irregularities. Over the next six months, SHAPE expects to undertake a more thorough review, and here the new U.S. program will be kept in mind. Even then, however, it will surely be found difficult to justify certain of the reported U.S. program reductions.

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Our first broad reaction to the problem is that the year 1959, with its impending and probably protracted conversations with the Soviets over the whole issue of European security, is the worst possible time for the U.S. to indicate, for the first time, that there will be "significant" defaults on its part in meeting NATO requirements.

It should be clearly recognized in Washington that there are two extremely important and far-reaching consequences that we foresee: our Allies would interpret such actions as indicating that the U.S. esteemed the risk of aggression to be reduced; and it might be interpreted as the commencement of a U.S. policy of gradual withdrawal, raising doubts as to whether the U.S. would react in the event of localized aggression in Europe.

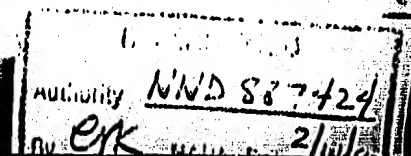
These factors would in turn have two detrimental effects:

- (1) They would certainly invite and probably result in a slackening of NATO defense effort on the part of our European Allies, who take the pitch from the U.S. as to the seriousness of the situation. If there is one thing certain to reduce the possibility of getting a greater defense effort from our Allies, it would be such a course of action.
- (2) It would foster tendencies toward a soft policy in negotiations with the Soviets, and render the development of a firm Western line all the more difficult. While it would not be intended that this information should reach the Russians, experience shows us that if it becomes the basis of planning figures, there are good chances of leaks. Should such leaks occur, the effect on Russian policy might be two-fold: (1) The Russians might be led to an erroneous interpretation of U.S. intentions, thus increasing chances of war by mistake; (2) The Russian position in East-West negotiations would tend to harden in anticipation of commencement of a Western pull-out.

Details of the reductions in U.S. force contributions would have to be very carefully studied in order to see whether they could be presented in a way which would obviate the foregoing. If they could not be so presented, and I don't see how "significant shortfalls" could be so presented, we would be faced with a very serious choice: either not to report these long-term plans to our Allies, thus breaking faith with them, and running a risk of the information leaking to them through other channels; or to disclose our hand at this time, with equally dangerous results.

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These risks are so big that they lead us to the simple conclusion that we have got to find ways to hold off such force cuts and to seek the ways and means to obviate them.

We shall have more after talking with General Norstad, but these are my first reactions.

Sincerely,

  
Frederick E. Nolting, Jr.  
Deputy Chief of Mission

P. S. I have not had the chance to take this letter up with the Ambassador, but I'm sending it nevertheless since the pouch closes in about 15 minutes. I shall take it up with him promptly and let you have his further reactions.

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